

What is claimed is:

1. A method for detecting intracellular cholesterol comprising contacting a permeabilized cell with labeled C θ complex and detecting the binding of labeled C θ complex to
5 cholesterol.

2. A method for identifying an agent that modulates cholesterol accumulation comprising exposing mutant NPC1 cells to a test agent, evaluating the level of cholesterol
10 accumulation in the mutant NPC1 cells exposed to the test agent, and comparing the evaluated level to the level of cholesterol accumulation in mutant NPC1 cells not exposed to the test agent, wherein a decrease in the level of cholesterol accumulation in the mutant NPC1 cells exposed
15 to the test agent as compared to the level in mutant NPC1 cells not exposed to the test agent is indicative of the test agent being a cholesterol inhibitor.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the mutant NPC1 cells
20 comprise CHO CT43 or CT60 cells.

4. The method of claim 2 wherein levels of cholesterol accumulation are evaluated via binding of labeled C θ complex.
25

5. A method for identifying an agent that modulates cholesterol accumulation comprising exposing mutant NPC1 cells to a test agent, evaluating the level of cholesterol accumulation in the mutant NPC1 cells exposed to the test
30 agent, and comparing the evaluated level to the level of cholesterol accumulation in parental cells not exposed to the test agent, wherein the level of cholesterol accumulation in the mutant NPC1 cells exposed to the test

agent is equal to the level of cholesterol accumulation in the parental cells not exposed to the test agent is indicative of the test agent being a cholesterol inhibitor.

5 6. The method of claim 5 wherein the mutant *NPC1* cells comprise CHO CT43 or CT60 cells and the parental cells comprise CHO 25RA cells.

 7. The method of claim 5 wherein levels of cholesterol
10 accumulation are evaluated via binding of labeled C θ complex.

 8. A method of inhibiting over accumulation of cholesterol in cells comprising administering to the cells
15 a cholesterol inhibitor identified by the method of claim 2.

 9. A method of inhibiting over accumulation of cholesterol in cells comprising administering to the cells
20 a cholesterol inhibitor identified by the method of claim 5.

 10. A method of treating or preventing a disease or disorder associated with over accumulation of cholesterol
25 in cells comprising administering to a patient a cholesterol inhibitor identified by the method of claim 2.

 11. A method of treating or preventing a disease or disorder associated with over accumulation of cholesterol
30 in cells comprising administering to a patient a cholesterol inhibitor identified by the method of claim 5.